

Message Text

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SUBJECT: USN PLANS FOR SIGONELLA

REF: ROME 6081 DTG 141220A APR 77 (NOTAL)

1. THE NAVY IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN PLANNING TO INCREASE
BOTH PERSONNEL AND AIRCRAFT AT THE NAVAL AIR FACILITY AT
SIGONELLA. THE GOAL IS TO PROVIDE ENHANCED LOGISTICS
SUPPORT CAPABILITY FOR FLEET OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
IN THE 1980'S. IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PLANS WOULD ENTAIL
THE EXPENDITURE OF SUBSTANTIAL SUMS OF MONEY TO IMPROVE
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THE FACILITY'S CAPABILITIES. THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IS
UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE OF THESE PLANS FROM RELATED NATO
INFRASTRUCTURE SUBMISSIONS.

2. IN THE PAST FEW YEARS THE AIRFIELD AT SIGONELLA AND ITS
ASSOCIATED COMPLEX HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT US
BASE COMPLEXES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

CALL FOR SUBSTANTIAL OUTLAYS OF INFRASTRUCTURE MONIES, WHICH THE GOI IS PROGRAMMING WITHIN NATO FOR OPERATIONAL FACILITIES. THESE EXPENDITURES ARE TO BE SUPPLEMENTED BY NATIONAL FUNDING TO FULFILL USER-NATION OBLIGATIONS TO PROVIDE PERSONNEL SUPPORT FACILITIES. A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF PLANNED GROWTH AT SIGONELLA IS COMPENSATION FOR CLOSURE

OF NAF NAPLES AS WELL AS FOR INCREASED VULNERABILITY OF AND DECREASED PEACETIME ACCESS TO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN FACILITIES AT SOUDA BAY AND ATHENS. CONTROL OF THE SICILIAN STRAITS IS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN NATO MEDITERRANEAN SEA LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND IS KEY TO REINFORCEMENT OF ADRIATIC, AEGEAN AND EAST MEDITERRANEAN.

3. AN EXTENSIVE MILITARY CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM COSTING \$25 MILLION WAS COMPLETED AT SIGONELLA BETWEEN FY 71 AND FY 75. AIRFIELD FACILITIES, SHARED WITH ITALIAN NAVY OPERATING SQUADRONS, HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED ENTIRELY WITH NATO INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS. THE RECENT MILITARY CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM ADDED SEVERAL US FUNDED ADMINISTRATIVE AND PERSONNEL SUPPORT FACILITIES AT THE AIRFIELD. WITH THE COMPLETION OF THESE FACILITIES, THE SIXTH FLEET TACTICAL SUPPORT SQUADRON (VR-24) HAS BEEN RELOCATED TO SIGONELLA FROM NAPLES. SIGONELLA CONTINUES ITS SUPPORT OF A DEPLOYED ASW PATROL (VP) SQUADRON OF NINE P-3 AIRCRAFT AS WELL AS ITS OTHER CURRENT MISSIONS INVOLVING COMMUNICATIONS AND ORDNANCE STORAGE. US MILITARY PERSONNEL AT THE BASE HAVE INCREASED FROM 1,324 TO 1971 TO ABOUT 2,000 TODAY. THE NAVY IS PROJECTING A FURTHER INCREASE BOTH IN PERSONNEL
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AND AIRCRAFT BY THE EARLY 1980'S TO EXPAND AIR LOGISTICS SUPPORT. PERSONNEL INCREASE WILL LIKELY BE MODEST; ACTUAL NUMBER WILL OF COURSE BE COORDINATED IN ADVANCE WITH EMBASSY AND GOI. THE NAVY HAS DEVELOPED FACILITIES PLANS TO MEET THIS INCREASE AND DOD HAS APPROVED PROGRAMMING THE BACHELOR HOUSING PORTION IN ITS FY 78 AND 79 MILITARY CONSTRUCTION BUDGETS. NATO INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING IS ALSO BEING SOUGHT FOR EXPANDED HANGAR AND PARKING APRON FACILITIES. ESTABLISHMENT OF A MAC AIR CARGO TERMINAL IS ALSO PLANNED, WITH FACILITIES AVAILABLE UNDER THE RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF POSSIBLE CONFLICT WITH GOI PLANS FOR ITS ACTIVITIES AT SIGONELLA.

4. FYI: AS IS CLEAR FROM THE FOREGOING, THE NUMBER OF US PERSONNEL AT SIGONELLA DOES IN FACT EXCEED THE 750 OF THE ORIGINAL BIA AGREEMENT. THE BUILD-UP HAS BEEN, IN EACH INSTANCE, THE RESULT OF RELOCATION OF ACTIVITIES OR THE ADDITION OF MISSIONS TO WHICH THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AND EMBASSY HAVE BEEN PRIVY AND WHICH THE GOI HAS APPROVED.

THE GOI HAS NOT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE RAISED THE ISSUE OF PERSONNEL NUMBERS AT SIGONELLA WITH THE USG. WE NOTE THAT OUR AGREEMENT WITH THE GOI ON AUGUSTA BAY PERMITS 1,400 ASHORE THERE FOR FLEET SUPPORT ACTIVITIES. MOST OF THESE ARE ACTUALLY AT SIGONELLA, CONTRIBUTING TO THE EXCESSS OVER 750. IN OUR OPINION AUGUSTA BAY AND SIGONELLA COULD IN FACT BE CONSIDERED AS A SINGLE COMPLEX. ANOTHER 500 OF THE PERSONNEL ASHORE AT SIGONELLA ARE THERE ON DEPLOYED

STATUS WITH MPA SQUADRON, SEA BEES AND A MINE ASSEMBLY DETACHMENT RATHER THAN ON PERMANENT ASSIGNMENT. IF THE GOI RAISES NEED FOR AN AMENDMENT TO BILATERAL INFRA-STRUCTURE AGREEMENT, WE COULD EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF CONSIDERING AUGUSTA BAY AND SIGONELLA AS A SINGLE COMPLEX, AND OF NOT COUNTING ROTATIONAL PERSONNEL, AS IS DONE IN ICELAND. END FYI.

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5. YOU MAY DRAW UPON PARAS 1-3 ABOVE TO RESPOND TO INQUIRIES FROM THE GOI ON NAVY PLANS TO BEEF UP THE NAF AT SIGONELLA, KEEPING IN MIND THAT THESE PLANS BEYOND FY 1979 HAVE NOT YET BEEN APPROVED AT THE DOD/OSD LEVEL. DEPT AND DOD WOULD APPRECIATE REPORT OF ITALIAN REACTION. IF EMBASSY DESIRES ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, US NAVY IS PREPARED TO SEND A BRIEFING TEAM TO ROME. VANCE

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